

Open to ^{the} _{New} Shades



Mae Hong Son



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Nestled in a deep valley hemmed in by high mountain ranges, Mae Hong Son has long been isolated from the outside world. Frequently cloaked in mist, the name derives from the region's history as a training ground for elephants. Today, Mae Hong Son is better known as an emerging nature-tourism destination, with growing numbers of people attracted by the spectacular scenery, hilltribe communities and soft adventure opportunities. Photographers are particularly drawn to the 'three-season' morning mists and fields of sunflowers.

Mae Hong Son is also known for the ethnic Thai Yai people, who may at one time have been the most numerous of the ethnic Thai tribes in Southeast Asia. The Thai Yai culture has had a strong influence on the province, most noticeably in its architecture. Although a part of the Lanna region, the indigenous Thai Yai people living in Mae Hong Son are faced with very cold weather during winter and extremely hot weather in the summer, with mist or fog practically throughout the whole year. Not surprisingly they have had to adapt to the environment. As a result, their architectural style is different from other Lanna communities.



Mae Hong Son



- ① Bua Tong (Sunflower) Fields at Doi Mae U-kho
- ② Tham Pla – Pha Suea National Park
- ③ Ban Ruam Thai or Pang Ung
- ④ Wat Phrathat Doi Kong Mu
- ⑤ Poi Sang Long Festival
- ⑥ Wat Chong Kham, Wat Chong Klang
- ⑦ Ban Rak Thai
- ⑧ Ban Sai Ngam Hot Spring
- ⑨ Ban Huai Hee Hiking
- ⑩ Su Tong Pe Bridge



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1 Bua Tong (Sunflower) Fields at Doi Mae U-kho

The Dok Bua Tong burst into full bloom in early winter during November-December, painting the entire area of Doi Mae U-kho in brilliant yellow and attracting flocks of visitors to Khun Yuam district. Pop-up camp sites are available to visitors during the Bua Tong Bloom Festival, 26 km. from the district on Highway No. 1263. Visitors can rent a tent for camping on the hill. Contact Khun Yuam district office Tel: +66 5369 1108 or Namtok Mae Surin National Park Tel: +66 5306 1073.

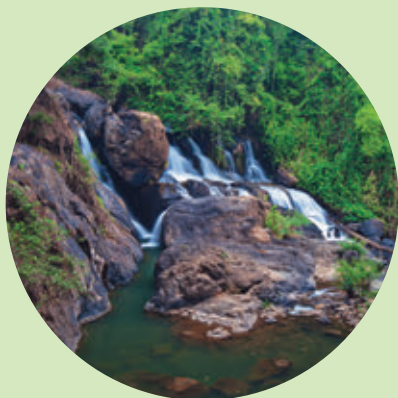


2 Tham Pla – Pha Suea National Park

Tham Pla, is about 17 km. from town on Highway No. 1095 (Mae Hong Son-Pai), is a popular spot for nature lovers, surrounded by cool forested hills and bubbling brooks. A popular natural attraction is a hollow water-filled cave populated by freshwater fish known as Pla Mung or Pla Khang, a type of carp. The fish are safe from being caught as they are believed to belong to the gods.

Another attraction is the Namtok Pha Suea waterfall at Tambon Mokchampaie about 26 km. from town on Route 1095 to Pai district with a left turn at Km. 191. This large waterfall starts its journey in Myanmar and runs full during the late rainy season (August-September).

Accommodation is available. Tel: +66 5361 9036, +66 5369 2055 or +66 2562 0760. www.dnp.go.th



3 Ban Ruam Thai or Pang Ung

Ban Ruam Thai or Pang Ung is 44 km. away from Mueang Mae Hong Son. Take the route to Pha Seau waterfall to Ban Na Pa Paek and then turn left and continue for another 6 km. Here, visitors can meet a variety of hilltribes people and sample the locally-grown coffee. Behind the village is a beautiful lake and evergreen forest area. Home-stay accommodation and camp sites are available nearby. Tel: +66 5361 1244 Fax: +66 5361 1649.





4 Wat Phrathat Doi Kong Mu

Wat Phrathat Doi Kong Mu is a temple that was erected by the first governor of Mae Hong Son, its design suggesting a strong Burmese influence. The highlights of this attraction are the two lavishly decorated pagodas. The temple's hilltop location affords panoramic views of the city and surrounding mountains and valleys.

5 Poi Sang Long Festival

Poi Sang Long Festival is the celebration of novice ordination and is of great importance to the Thai Yai tribe people. Traditionally, the candidate-novice, his head cleanly shaven and wrapped with head-cloth in the Burmese style, will don prince-like clothing and put on valuable jewels and gems, and ride a horse or be carried over the shoulders of a man to the city shrine. On the ordination eve, a procession of offerings and other necessary personal belongings is paraded through the town streets and placed at the monastery where the ordination will take place the next day. It is usually held during April before the Buddhist Rain Retreat period.



6 Wat Chong Kham Wat Chong Klang

Wat Chong Kham is an old temple on the bank of the swamp Nong Chong Kham, built in 1827 by Thai Yai artisans, its pillars gilded in gold leaf. The temple houses a large Buddha statue with a lap width of 4.85 m. cast by Burmese craftsmen, and another statue, a replica of the Buddha image in Wat Suthat in Bangkok.



Wat Chong Klang, next to Wat Chong Kham, is a temple that houses a replica of the Phra Phuttha Sihing along with several interesting items including wooden figurines of characters from the ancient Buddhist Phra Vejsandon Jakata, stories made by Burmese craftsmen and brought here in 1857. There is also a collection of glass paintings about the Jakata and Prince Siddhartha, captioned in Burmese with notations indicating that the paintings were by Thai Yai artisans from Mandalay.



7 Ban Rak Thai

Ban Rak Thai (literally translates to “the Thai-loving village”), sometimes referred to as Mae Aw in guide books and maps, is a village near Mae Hong Son. Settled by former Chinese Kuo Min Tang (Nationalist) fighters from Yunnan Province, China, after the Communist takeover of China. The population is about 800, mainly Chinese or Thai-born Chinese. Much of the signage is in Chinese, and locals speak with a heavily accented version of Mandarin Chinese. The area is known for its Taiwanese-style Oolong and Jasmine tea, and strolling through the village, you can step into any of the dozen tea shops and sample the teas on offer.

8 Ban Sai Ngam Hot Spring

Ban Sai Ngam Hot Spring, also known as the Secret Hot Spring, is about 15 km. north of Pai. The Hot Spring has a couple of large pools surrounded by lush rainforest, great for soaking in with water a pleasant 34°C and crystal clear. There are change rooms and toilets located here as well as food and drink stalls where you can purchase a snack or a drink.

Address: Sai Ngam Hot Spring, U-Mong, Tambon Mae Na Toeng, Amphoe Pai, Mae Hong Son 58130. Open daily 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., entry: 20 Baht.



9 Ban Huai Hee Hiking

Ban Huai Hee is a small, ethnic Karen community located 26 km. southeast of Mae Hong Son city. The village lies at the base of Doi Pui, the province's highest mountain. At 1722 meters, Doi Pui is the highest point in Mae Hong Son. The hike to the peak takes a full day and the hikers are often rewarded by a spectacular sunrise or sunset. On route, your local guides will point out flora and fauna, including edible and medicinal plants and visit a community project to protect wild orchids.

Depending on the season, guests can help their host families to plant or harvest mountain rice, collect vegetables from the fields and forest and learn how Karen people work to balance farming and conservation.

10 Su Tong Pe Bridge



The views from this bamboo bridge, supposedly the longest in Thailand, are spectacular, especially in the early morning mist. Located on the outskirts of Mae Hong Son City, it spans several rice paddies and a wide stream near the temple it serves. The name of the Su Tong Pae bridge translates to 'successful prayer' in the Tai Yai language.

The bridge, built by local villagers, took two months and 12 days to build and it first opened on 5th August 2012. The local people believe if you make a wish while crossing the bridge, your wish will come true. Monks leave the monasteries early in the morning about 6:30 a.m. carrying bowls across bridge in which they receive donations.

Getting here: If coming from Mae Hon Son city on Highway 1095 the bridge is about 10 km. from town on the left-hand side.

HOW TO GET THERE

By Car

Mae Hong Son is located 924 km. from Bangkok. Drive from Bangkok to Chiang Mai and then choose the following routes to Mae Hong Son:

1. Chiang Mai–Hot–Mae Sariang–Khun Yuam–Mae Hong Son route (Highway No. 108) Total distance of 349 km.
2. Chiang Mai–Mae Malai–Pai–Mae Hong Son route (Highway No. 1095). Total distance 245 km.

By Bus

Daily air-conditioned bus service departs Bangkok's Northern Bus Terminal (Mochit 2). The trip takes about 15 hours. Tel: 1490 www.transport.co.th or Sombut Tour Tel. +66 2936 2495-8, +66 5368 4222 www.sombattour.com

By Train

Travel from Bangkok to Chiang Mai by rail and then continue to Mae Hong Son by bus. Tel: 1690, +66 2220 4444 www.railway.co.th

By Air

Daily flights on Bangkok Airways: Tel. 1771, +66 2270 6699 www.bangkokair.com, Nok Air: Tel. 1318, +66 2088 8955 www.nokair.com. Mae Hong Son Airport Tel. +66 5361 2097

Travel from Chiang Mai

By Road

Mae Hong Son can be reached from Chiang Mai either by Highway No. 108 via Hot, Mae Sariang, or Highway No. 1095 via Pai. Chiang Mai-Mae Hong Son buses operated by Prem Pracha Transport (Tel: Chiang Mai office: +66 5330 4748, Mae Hong Son Office: +66 5368 4100, Pai Bus Station Tel. +66 8 1026 8852) departing from Chiang Mai Arcade Bus Terminal every day. The bus that goes via Highway No.108 takes 8 hours and the one that goes via Highway No. 1095 takes 6 hours.



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